

RAC NOTES

*Arizona Bureau of Land Management
Resource Advisory Council Newsletter
January 2005, Number 14*

Highlights of RAC Meeting in Phoenix, AZ, August 18, 2004

On August 18th, a RAC business meeting was convened at the BLM National Training Center in Phoenix. **Elaine Zielinski, BLM Arizona State Director**, welcomed the group and gave a **summary of legislation, regulations, and statewide issues**. Her report included the following topics:

- **2004 Fire Outlook,**
- **Airtanker Restrictions,**
- **Military Affairs Commission,**
- **Organizational Effectiveness Update,**
- **July Meeting of Arizona Cattlegrowers Association,**
- **Visits to Arizona by Secretary Norton, Director Clarke, and Mr. Ben Burnette, Office of Management and Budget, and**
- **RAC Annual Work Plan.**

Elaine also recognized the five outgoing RAC members and thanked them for their leadership and interest in developing collaborative solutions to public lands issues and challenges. She presented an award to each of the following outgoing members in appreciation for their service: Lee Aitken, Rick Holloway, Bill Branan, Sanford Cohen, and Mary Dahl.

Next the RAC received an update on the **100th Anniversary of the Antiquities Act** by Gary Stumpf, BLM Cultural Resources Program Lead. BLM wants to do

something special in 2006 and revitalize public interest in cultural heritage using programs and sites that already exist, e.g., Adventures in the Past. He provided a summary of ideas that have been developed in collaboration with the field offices. A new BLM web page will provide a comprehensive source of information on cultural heritage programs and volunteer opportunities.

Next, McKinley-Ben Miller, BLM Forestry, Stewardship Contracting, and Biomass Utilization Lead, gave an overview of **stewardship contracting** and how it is used by BLM to manage and restore forests and woodlands. Congress provided BLM this new tool in the 2003 Appropriations Act. The BLM describes the end result it wants to achieve in a certain area. The contractor then develops a mutually agreed-upon plan of actions to achieve that goal. BLM may enter into multi-year contracts and use the value of products removed to offset some or all of the costs of the overall work accomplished. The agency is encouraged to work with the local community to design and implement the contract and in the process, build community capacity and bring jobs and income into the local community.

Next, Walt Meyers, University of Arizona Extension Service, gave a presentation on a **University of Arizona project on collecting and interpreting rangeland monitoring data**. The project covers ten allotments containing BLM, Forest Service,

State, and private lands. He discussed the purpose and focus of the project. The objective is to get more coordination across agencies in monitoring and interpretation of data and to promote the idea of coordinated management. The monitoring protocols will be used to develop recommended approaches or study designs for collecting and interpreting monitoring data as a basis for management planning and decision-making in Arizona.

The **Public Comment period** was opened by the Chair but no comments were received.

Next, Mike Taylor, BLM Deputy State Director for Resources, summarized ongoing actions for **land use plans** in process. He responded to RAC member questions on specific plans and provided a handout which gave a more detailed update for all of the plans. The RAC desires to stay abreast of land use planning issues and will continue to receive updates at future RAC meetings.

Next, the RAC reviewed **Rangeland Resource Team (RRT) nominations** from the Arizona Strip and Tucson Field Offices. After review and discussion, the RAC approved the nominations as proposed.

Next, the RAC reviewed the **Field Manager Reports** and posed questions on specific items of interest. The Service First proposal by the Tucson Field Office, which envisions a partnership with the Coronado National Forest to co-manage the Las Cienegas watershed, raised significant RAC interest and discussion. RAC members expressed some concerns based on their experiences working with the Forest Service in several projects. The RAC requested more information on the Service First

initiative and Las Cienegas proposal at the next RAC meeting. Another topic eliciting RAC interest was the Kingman Field Office report on mining of split-estate lands (BLM as surface owner, private entity as subsurface owner). Different rules apply for mining on split-estate lands and BLM has requested a legal opinion to clarify BLM's authority and jurisdiction. The RAC requested further information on this topic at a future RAC meeting.

RAC Working Group Reports.

a. **Standards and Guidelines (S&G).** The Chair of the S&G Work Group discussed the following issues:

- Status of Grazing Regulations. The final rule is expected in October 2004 with an effective date of December 2004.

- Procedures for Recruiting and Appointing RRT Members. The Work Group will draft up some guidelines for the RAC's review at its next meeting.

- Nature Conservancy Review of Literature on Grazing in the Sonoran Desert. The draft report is out for comment. The Work Group agreed that it wants to submit comments. The Chair will consolidate and submit the comments.

- Monitoring on Las Cienegas. The Work Group discussed the role of the Nature Conservancy in evaluating monitoring data at Las Cienegas. There is concern that procedures and data interpretation should be consistent with methods used elsewhere. It was agreed that further consultation with range monitoring specialists from various groups would be desirable. The Work Group will convene a follow-up meeting on this issue.

b. **Public Relations.** The draft August 2004 RAC Notes newsletter was distributed to the RAC members for review. It included results of the February and May 2004 meetings. RAC members were asked to provide any changes to

the Chair. The newsletter will be posted to the BLM web site.

c. **Recreation.** The Chair discussed the Work Group meeting with Don Applegate, BLM Recreation Program Lead, to review the BLM National recreation strategy and to discuss the need to align and update the Arizona BLM recreation strategy. Don Applegate will give the Work Group a follow-on presentation in this area. The Chair will gather additional information on use of partnerships to further BLM and local community recreation/tourism goals.

d. **Wild Horse and Burro.** The Work Group met with Mike Taylor and reviewed progress to date on burro removals and adoptions. A budget reprogramming action resulted in getting an additional \$226,000 for the program. This should allow the BLM to meet the Appropriate Management Level (AML) by end of this year. Mike Taylor addressed various questions from the Work Group and passed out a handout which provided more details on burro objectives and accomplishments.

e. **Land Use Planning and Tenure.**

The Work Group met with BLM to receive an overview of the emerging plans for Agua Fria National Monument/Bradshaw-Harquahala and Grand Canyon Parashant National Monument/Vermillion Cliffs National Monument/Arizona Strip. The Work Group was pleased with the opportunity to learn more about the direction and scope of the draft planning efforts and to dialog with the field office managers on specific areas of interest. The RAC looks forward to providing comments when the draft plans are ready for RAC review.

f. **Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV).** The Chair expressed a concern that the RAC and OHV Work Group have an opportunity to participate in the evaluation of scoping comments and development of the draft land use plans (e.g., proposed route designations) before they are prepared. Regarding the Adopt-A-Trail Partnership initiative, Bill Gibson, Arizona BLM OHV Program Lead, gave a report on progress achieved to date. A pilot program will be developed and implemented in conjunction with a Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant. Volunteers will (1) monitor selected and agreed upon routes, (2) maintain selected and agreed upon routes, (3) foster public stewardship of the land, and (4) develop and test best practices for an Adopt-A-Trail program. Individuals or groups will enter into BLM volunteer agreements. The RTP grant is expected to be approved soon.

Next, the RAC reviewed and discussed recommendations for **Director Clarke's "Best Practices"**. The RAC Chair passed out a handout with recommendations on how BLM can improve customer service and resource management. She will forward the consolidated list to the RAC National Coordinator for the BLM Director's consideration.

Next, the RAC Chair discussed the need for the RAC to develop the **2005 Annual Work Plan**. A draft outline for the plan was passed out for RAC review. A Work Group was established to flesh out the draft and prepare an update for the next RAC meeting.

Highlights of RAC Meeting in Phoenix, AZ, October 27, 2004

On October 27th, a RAC business meeting was convened at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza in Phoenix, AZ. Frances Werner, RAC Chair,

called the meeting to order and welcomed the new RAC members. **Elaine Zielinski, BLM Arizona State Director**, welcomed the group and gave a **summary of legislation, regulations, and statewide issues**. Her report included the following topics:

- **Environmental Achievement Award, Yuma Field Office, for the Mittry Lake Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) project,**
- **Organizational Effectiveness Update,**
- **Personnel Update,**
- **New Kingman Field Office,**
- **Kane and Two Mile Ranch Acquisition,**
- **Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan,**
- **2004 Governor's Rural Development Conference.**
- **Achievement of Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs) for Wild Burros in Arizona,**
- **PG&E Topock Compressor Station Tour,**
- **Continuing Resolution, and**
- **Status of Proposed Revisions to the Grazing Regulations.**

Next, Deborah Stevens, Arizona RAC Coordinator, gave a **RAC orientation** to acquaint the new RAC members with the role and responsibilities of the RAC. She passed out a RAC orientation handbook that was developed by the National RAC Coordinator. It is an excellent and comprehensive compendium of essential information on BLM's key public laws and major programs and initiatives on a national level. She also discussed the RAC charter, RAC Work Groups, Rangeland Resource Teams (RRTs), Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs), S&G training and field tours, RAC and Work Group meeting schedules, RAC Notes, and administrative matters such as procedures for reimbursement of travel and

per diem. In addition, she spoke about the upcoming RAC orientation presentation to be given at the next RAC quarterly meeting that will cover short briefings on the BLM multiple use resource programs. Also, she mentioned that each RAC Work Group Chair would provide a short overview of the tasks and coordination they provide, and their interest to have the new members participate in their Work Group.

Next, Lonna O'Neal, Deputy State Director for Business Services provided an overview of the **"Service First" Initiative** and what it means to participating federal agencies and customer service. It has been successfully used to improve efficiency, customer service, and mission accomplishment via sharing of agency resources, e.g., collocation of offices and sharing road crews. "Service First" does not change regulations or policies that are different for Forest Service and BLM. Shela McFarlin, Tucson Field Office Manager, provided some thought on how the Las Cienegas NCA proposes to work with the Coronado National Forest through "Service First" and other cooperative management agreements. There are four levels of cooperation, from simple actions to more complex, co-sharing of agency resources and cross-delegation of duties. The Tucson Field Office is taking "baby steps" to implement "Service First" with the Coronado National Forest. Shela cited some examples of actions contemplated. However, several members of the RAC who are also members of the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership (SVPP), expressed concerns regarding the negative image of the Forest Service in the Sonoita Valley. This could harm BLM's image. Thus, it was agreed that implementation of "Service First" should be carefully approached and provide opportunities to build trust with the public. It was agreed that the Tucson Field Office will keep the RAC abreast of any "Service First"

projects with the Forest Service in the Las Cienegas NCA.

Next, Ralph Costa, BLM Arizona Mining Engineer, gave an interesting and informative presentation on **Minerals and Split Estate Lands in Arizona**. He passed out a handout which addressed definitions and laws/regulations that govern BLM's authorities with respect to split estate lands. He also discussed the complicated legal issues that typically arise with split estate lands. As a general observation, BLM Arizona does not want to obtain any additional split estate lands as they are more difficult to administer and often, the long range objectives desired by BLM cannot be obtained on lands with split ownership.

The **Public Comment period** was opened by the Chair but no comments were received.

Next, Bill Childress, San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area Manager, gave an excellent presentation regarding the **Draft Report to Congress on Section 321 of the Defense Authorization Act**. Section 321 of the 2004 Defense Authorization Act recognizes the Upper San Pedro Partnership (USPP), Arizona, a partnership of Fort Huachuca, Arizona, other Federal, State, and local governmental and nongovernmental entities, and its efforts to establish a collaborative water use management program in the Sierra Vista Subwatershed, Arizona, to achieve the sustainable yield of the regional aquifer, so as to protect the Upper San Pedro River, Arizona, and the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, Arizona. Section 321 of the Act, requires that the Secretary of Interior prepare and submit by December 31, 2004, in consultation with the Secretaries of Agriculture and Defense and

in cooperation with the other members of the USPP, a report on the water-use management and conservation measures implemented and needed to restore and maintain the sustainable yield of the regional aquifer by and after September 30, 2011. The Section 321 Draft Report is complete and is undergoing agency coordination and review. Groundwater overdraft (storage deficit) was 10,400 acre feet in 2002. By 2011 with anticipated growth the estimated overdraft would reach 13,300 acre feet. Agencies within the partnership will implement projects through 2011 that will augment, recharge and conserve water to eliminate the groundwater overdraft. Partnership projects would yield an estimated 13,900 acre feet by 2011. Confirmation and refinement of these estimates are under evaluation by the Partnership and may be revised in 2005. Bill Childress responded to several RAC member questions and discussed BLM's plans to reduce water use through mesquite removal and purchase of conservation easements. Two RAC members who had reviewed the draft report expressed their concerns regarding the overall effectiveness and adequacy of the proposed water management measures. For example, the report did not address growth management strategies that go to the root cause of the overdraft. A proposed letter for the RAC to send to the Arizona State Director was circulated for the RAC's review and approval. It laid out four major concerns regarding future reports and stated that a wide range of measures are necessary to achieve the long-term health and sustainability of the regional aquifer. After RAC discussion and edits, the letter was approved for signature by the RAC Chair and release to Elaine Zielinski.

Next, Mike Taylor, BLM Deputy State Director for Resources, gave an excellent update on status of **Arizona Land Use Plans**. He passed out a handout with details on each planning effort. Regarding the Agua Fria and

Grand Canyon Parashant plans, the State Office is working the language on managing for wilderness characteristics. He also discussed significant issues contained in the Yuma Scoping Report. Regarding the Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan, public outreach efforts have begun and there has been good attendance at the open houses.

RAC Working Group Reports.

a. **Standards and Guidelines (S&G).** The Chair of the S&G Work Group discussed the following topics:

- Rangeland Resource Team (RRT) Guidelines and Application Forms. The RAC approved the guidelines and forms as presented.

- Nature Conservancy Literature Review. Members of the S&G Work Group met with Phoenix Field Office personnel to discuss their concerns about the review and the Group's belief that the review reflects an anti-grazing bias by the authors. A letter was drafted to express the RAC's concerns to the Arizona State Director and Phoenix Field Office Manager. After RAC review and discussion, the letter was approved for signature and release by the RAC Chair.

- BLM update on permit renewals, grazing regulations, and BLM national monitoring initiative.

- Training for RRT and RAC members on Standards and Guidelines.

b. **Land Use Planning and Tenure.** The Chair discussed the implications of Proposition 100 and the potential for land exchanges near Luke Air Force Base. We need an update from BLM after results of Proposition 100 are known so that we can better understand and support BLM's policies for using the land exchange process.

c. **Public Relations.** The Chair will prepare a RAC Notes newsletter in January 2005 to reflect results of the August and October 2004 RAC meetings.

d. **Recreation.** The Chair discussed the need to align and update the Arizona BLM document on Recreation and Tourism on Public Lands in Arizona with the National BLM document on Priorities for Recreation and Visitor Services. The Work Group will develop a plan and strategy to accomplish this goal. It will identify State priorities for recreation/tourism, areas of concern specific to Arizona, and performance measures. It is also important to coordinate with the Arizona Office of Tourism as the Arizona BLM document is updated.

e. **Wild Horse and Burro.** The Chair stated that Doc Lane of the Arizona Cattlegrowers Association has been invited to discuss their public outreach efforts. Kelly Grissom, BLM Arizona Wild Horse and Burro Program Lead, discussed how increased burro gathers and drought conditions helped BLM achieve AMLs. As BLM rapidly moves to maintaining AMLs, the number of burros available for adoption will diminish.

f. **Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV).** The Chair discussed status of the Adopt-A-Trail initiative and stated it should be a go by January, 2005. To date, thirty-five users have been trained. There are issues being worked regarding OHV use on Castle Hot Springs road. Education and outreach efforts have been conducted on weekends, including giving users information on legal areas to ride. Regarding the Middle Gila area, the route evaluation process is still ongoing. The RAC OHV Work Group is in process of gathering OHV guidelines from other states to use in developing proposed Arizona BLM OHV guidelines.

Next, the RAC Chair passed out a draft version of the **2005 RAC Annual Work Plan** as prepared by the Work Group. She solicited RAC members' input and suggestions so that the Work Group could prepare a final draft for the next RAC meeting.

RAC Meetings Set for January 25, 2005 and May 3-4, 2005

The Arizona RAC invites the public to attend its regularly scheduled RAC meetings. The next meeting will be held January 25, 2005 at the BLM National Training Center in Phoenix, AZ., and May 3-4, 2005 in Kingman. *RAC Notes* from these two meetings will be published at a later date.

RAC Membership

Following is the list of *newly-appointed, **reappointed and current RAC members, the category they represent, and their place of residence. Each member's terms are for 3-years, and are staggered.

Commodity Category (5 members)

Ty Kelly, Grazing, Wickenburg, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

**Lee Aitken, Transportation/
ROW, Tucson, AZ - Term Ending 9/07
Sandra McCullen, Off-Road Vehicle
Use, Mesa, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

*Carolyn Loder, Energy/Minerals,
Tempe, AZ - Term Ending 9/07
Stephen Saway, Off-Road Vehicle Use,
Sierra Vista, AZ - Term Ending 9/05

Non-Commodity Category (5 members)

Glendon Collins, Dispersed Recreation,
Phoenix, AZ - Term Ending 9/05

**William Branan, Environmental, Elgin,
AZ - Term Ending 9/07

*Jan Kelly Holder, Dispersed Recreation,
Safford, AZ - Term Ending 9/07

Tina Clark, Historical/Archaeology, Yuma,
AZ - Term Ending 9/06

Frances Werner, Dispersed Recreation,
Tucson, AZ - Term Ending 9/05

Local Area Interests (5 members)

Lawrence Nelson, Elected Official, Yuma,
AZ - Term Ending 9/05

Lorraine Eiler, Native American Tribes,
Glendale, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

Lamar Smith, Academia, Benson, AZ -
Term Ending 9/05

*Jay Adkins, Public-At-Large, Goodyear,
AZ - Term Ending 9/07

Peggy Titus, Public-At-Large, Mayer, AZ -
Term Ending 9/06

Richard Hubbard is the Governor's
representative to the RAC. Frances Werner is
chair for the Arizona RAC.

For Further Information

If you have any questions about the RAC,
contact Deborah Stevens, BLM Public Affairs
Specialist, at the BLM Arizona State Office,
222 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, AZ
85004-2203, or call 602-417-9215. For the
latest approved RAC Meeting Minutes, check
BLM's External Home Page @
www.az.blm.gov

About RAC Notes

RAC Notes is published periodically by
the RAC Public Relations Working Group to
provide the public with information related to

current RAC activities and public land issues. To get on the mailing list, please contact

Deborah Stevens at (602) 417-9215 or e-mail to Deborah_Stevens@blm.gov.

The RAC Notes is also posted on the BLM Home Page @ www.az.blm.gov under the News/Resource Advisory Council button.

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